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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000612

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: GWOT ASSESSMENT: ARMENIA

REF: A) STATE 60796

Classified By: DCM A.F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

Summary

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[11.](#) (S) While Armenia consistently declares its eagerness to contribute to the Global War on Terror, most government officials and institutions do not believe that there is an imminent threat from within Armenia. While Armenia may be less vulnerable to terrorist attack than some of its neighbors, it is not immune. Our greatest concern is to prevent Armenia from becoming a transit country for illicit materials, persons or finances. Armenia has achieved some success in the war on terror but, for the most part, Armenia does not yet feel it is a battleground. End Summary.

Responsible Institutions

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[12.](#) (S) The Armenian National Security Service (NSS) has primary responsibility for the fight against terrorism, with the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, the Procurator General's Office making contributions as well. Russian Border Guards have responsibility for securing Armenia's international borders with Iran and Turkey, complicating this Mission's ability to engage on the issue.

Securing the Borders

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[13.](#) (S) Securing Armenia's state borders to prevent the illicit transit of people and materials is our primary area of concern. In late 2004, a vehicle which originated in Armenia was seized in Turkey after a small amount of Cesium-137 was discovered where it had been secreted in a load of scrap metal. This discovery followed the conviction in Armenia of a man who was attempting to smuggle highly enriched uranium. The NSS has been generally cooperative with the Embassy, especially on issues of smuggling of radioactive material. The USG has already provided monitoring equipment to help the GOAM interdict the smuggling of radioactive substances and is implementing a project to link computer data bases available to border guards. Nonetheless, more needs to be done to help the GOAM secure the borders and prevent the use of Armenia as a transit country.

[14.](#) (S) With 98 percent of Armenia's population ethnic Armenian, GOAM interlocutors frequently point to the difficulty a non-Armenian would have "blending in" with the population as a reason that Armenia could not be effectively used as a transit or staging country for terrorism. The NSS does keep a close watch on visiting Arabs, monitoring Syrian and Iranian nationals especially closely. They take the watch lists seriously, distribute them, and for the moment, there is no serious transit problem. The GOAM cites successes in identifying and detaining alleged Chechen terrorists, detaining Iranian nationals traveling on false documents, as well as some recent successes in hindering illegal border crossings as evidence to support their contention. Nonetheless, Iranian citizens travel to Armenia as small businessmen and for vacation, as do Syrian and Lebanese citizens. While we would agree with the GOAM that Armenia is an unlikely staging ground for major terrorist operations, it is certainly not inconceivable.

Kongra Gel Has A Presence

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[15.](#) (S) With a small ethnic Kurdish minority, the GOAM tolerates a Kurdish Cultural Center that is affiliated with Kongra Gel. Kongra Gel is not able to raise funds in Armenia (the ethnic Kurdish population is extremely poor), but their continued presence is an area of concern.

Cash Flow Largely Unregulated

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[16.](#) (C) According to recent estimates, nearly one billion

dollars in remittances flows into Armenia every year, providing a much-needed social safety net for most families and fueling the large underground economy. But these flows of funds also create the potential for use of Armenia as a transit country for terrorist finance. We already know that at least some of the money coming into the country is linked to organized crime, especially tied to Russia, but the GOAM has no way to verify that terrorist money is not flowing through Armenia as well. With USG assistance, the GOAM is working to establish a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) as the first step in getting control of this potential problem.

#### U.S. Training Helps Us, But Not Trainees

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17. (C) The USG has offered a number of ATA and other CT training courses to Armenian government officials but, with few exceptions, foreign training is not seen as career-enhancing and we have yet to see significant ripple effects within the organizations (especially the NSS and police) that have been targeted to receive training.

#### Comment

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18. (S) Our challenge is to build Armenia's ability to interdict illicit traffic in materials and persons and to strengthen oversight of financial institutions so that Armenia is not used as a transit point for terrorist finance. Success will require increased commitment from the GOAM, and that will require a change in attitude to recognize the reality of the threat.  
EVANS